

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release  
2011/

September 29, 2011

FACT SHEET

**2011 African Women's Entrepreneurship Program International Exchange**

Building on the fact that women are drivers of economic growth and prosperity, the International Visitor Leadership Program at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs brought 40 women entrepreneurs from 36 African nations to the United States for the second African Women's Entrepreneurship Exchange Program (AWEP).

For three weeks, the African women entrepreneurs were provided professional development training and networking opportunities with American counterparts from civil society, corporations, industry associations, non-profit organizations, and business alliances. The people-to-people exchange followed the 2011 African Women's Entrepreneurship Program Conference, which was held in Lusaka, Zambia in June, alongside the 2011 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum. AWEP is a Department of State partnership among the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, the Bureau of African Affairs, and the Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs.

Since its inception in 2010, the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program has empowered African small business owners and provided them the tools to: export to the United States under the terms of AGOA; increase their export capacities; strengthen public-private partnerships to reinforce program goals; and to establish or expand business relationships with U.S. partners. Following the 2010 program, ExxonMobil funded two follow-on trainings in Africa in partnership with Vital Voices. Additionally, program alumnae have established local chapters in several countries that strengthen economic ties and allow them to stay connected.

Overall, this initiative seeks to empower African women entrepreneurs by:

- Expanding opportunities for exports and U.S. investment in sub-Saharan Africa under AGOA;
- Recognizing and expanding the roles women play as advocates for strengthening national business climates for all women; and
- Instituting follow-up programs so that participants, in their role as community leaders, can pass on what they learn.

The women participating in this current program hail from Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Now in its 70<sup>th</sup> year, the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is the U.S. Department of State's premier professional exchange program, connecting current and emerging foreign leaders with their American counterparts through short-term programs to build mutual understanding on foreign policy issues. Nearly 200,000 distinguished individuals have participated in the program, including more than 320 current and former chiefs of state and heads of government, and thousands of leaders from the public and private sectors. More information on this program and IVLP can be found on <http://exchanges.state.gov/ivlp>.

###

Drafted: ECA/FO TSergeant 2-6043; (202) 288-3124

Approved: ECA/PE Deputy Assistant Secretary Satterfield (ok)

Cleared: ECA/PE CMiner (ok)

ECA/PE/V CGrabauskas (ok)

ECA/PASC MCowart (ok)

S/GWI TKeller (ok)

EEB CLacrosse (ok)

S/P JWaddleton (ok)

AF/PDPA EChan (ok)

D(B) CNeville (ok)

P MSimpson (ok)

R RGliha (ok)

PA/SCT: C Adler ok

S: M Fuchs ok

Drafted: EUR/PRA - Christian Yarnell, 7-5927

Cleared:

EUR/FO: DRussell	ok
EUR/FO: SBoyer	ok
EUR/PRA - MHardiman	ok
EUR/UMB – BHunt	ok
ISN/NESS – Dfenstermacher	ok
ISN/TR – BJenkins	ok
DOE: ABieniawski	ok
P: SSmith	ok
D: JEllison	ok
S/P: TNavratil	info
S/P: MFuchs	ok
F: MOates	ok
NSC: LHolgate	ok